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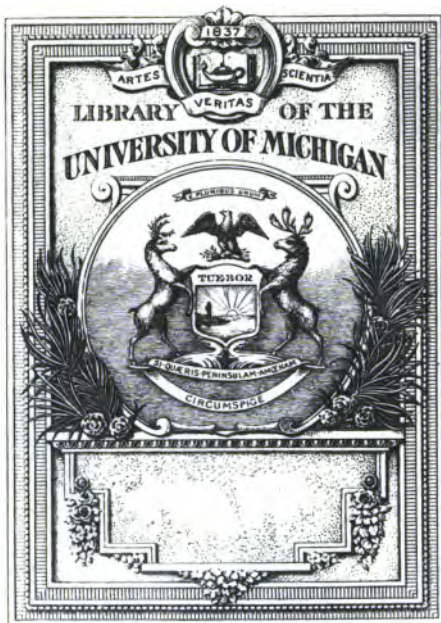
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Poems of
Independence
and Liberty



Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty

By William Wordsworth

*Reprinted on behalf of the Greek struggle for
the Independence of Crete*

With an Introduction

By Stopford A. Brooke

London Isbister and Company Ltd.
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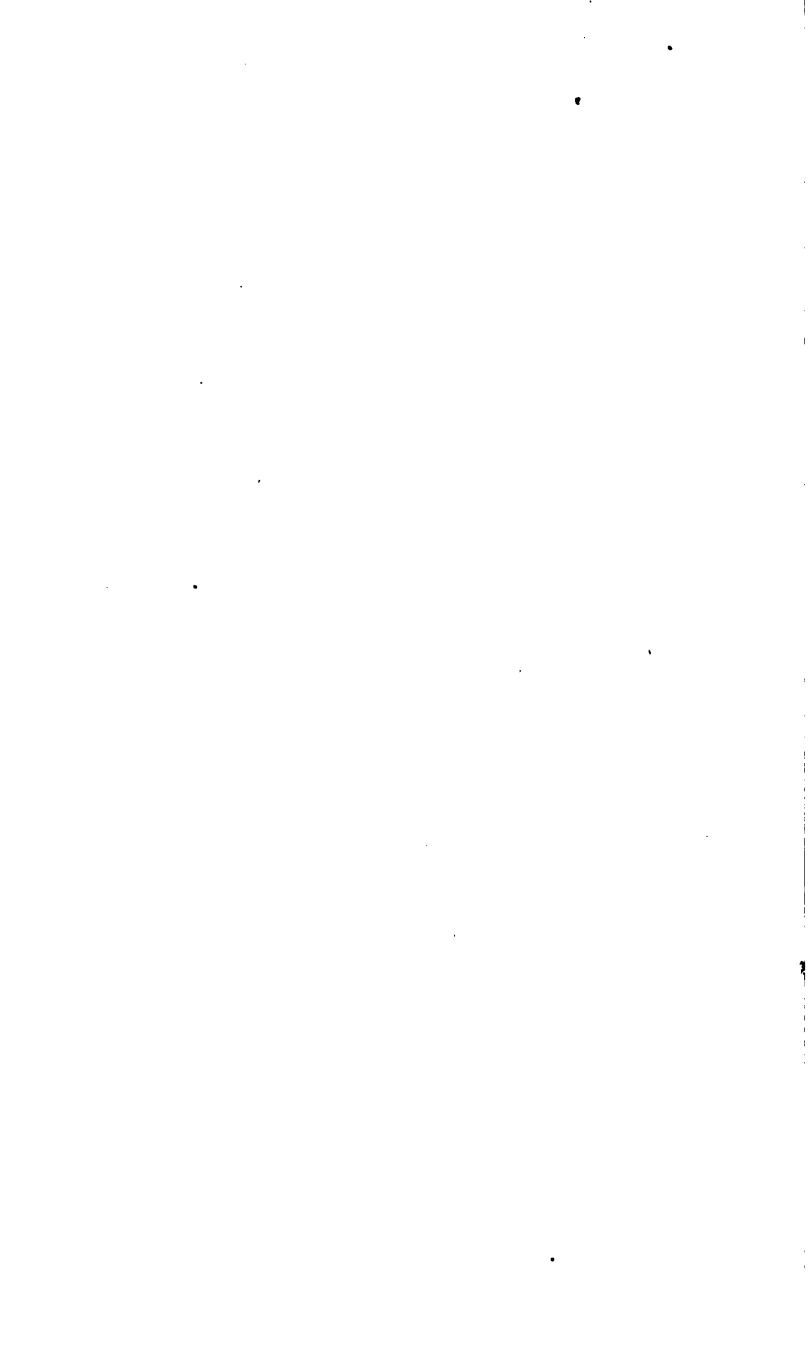
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INTRODUCTION

THESE poems of Wordsworth, collected by himself under their title—*Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*—are now published in a separate form as a remonstrance, and an encouragement to the English people—a remonstrance to those whose policy it is to check the national independence and liberty of the Cretans; and an encouragement to those who, following the long traditions of the English people, have looked on that policy with dismay, and have endured it, for a time, with patient but indignant difficulty.

The poems extend over a period of nearly fourteen years, from the Life-Consulship of Buonaparte to the Thanksgiving Day for the overthrow of Napoleon. They are of varying excellence; those of the *First Part* are far the best, and the earliest sonnets of the *Second Part* are much better than the later. Indeed, after

1810, the poetry fails more and more, till we are at last landed, in 1816, in the desert and waterless islands of the *Thanksgiving Ode*, where mechanical sensationalism labours to seem imagination. To contrast this unhappy poem with such splendid living things as the Sonnets to Venice, to Switzerland, and to Toussaint, is to see Overthrow face to face. How art thou fallen, Lucifer, son of the morning!

When Wordsworth began these poems the spirit of universal freedom was still with him. He desired it for all the earth. Wherever there was oppression, he hated it; wherever men rose against it, he took their side with passion, even against his own country. As time went on, his love of freedom was concentrated in his desire to see Napoleon, the great foe of liberty, destroyed; and it became only sympathy with the battle of England against the common oppressor of Europe. The desire for *universal* freedom was lost in the particular desire for the victory of his own country over her enemy. A few years passed by, and this change from universal to particular feeling so influenced him that the existing institutions of England and their exact preservation seemed to him to be the only guard and citadel of liberty. He gave all his political energies to their support. What England supported was right; and if she supported what she called the cause of order in the European nations, even where that order was oppressive of the people, she was still right. The struggles of the people earned his active sympathy no more. And it finally came to pass that he bore with scarcely a word of reproach or blame the cynical partition of Europe by

the Powers at the Congress of Vienna, and the re-establishment of such despotism in the States of Europe as of old he had abhorred and denounced in France. Even in England he had not one shred of sympathy with the emancipation of the Catholics crushed under iniquitous laws, or with the endeavours of the middle classes for a just representation.

This hardening into a stony conservatism had begun to be a disease in Wordsworth about 1812. The early and noble impulses which had filled his soul with health and life and universal sympathy with men, and which had inspired his unpremeditated verse, passed away from him. All his public poetry grew cold. Imagination fled away from it, even at last from the verse he dedicated to the human heart. It is true, warmth, life, and imagination lingered long in the verse he wrote about the heart of man, and on subjects beyond the present. But the great emotion of the universal and noble passions which belong to men as citizens of the nation of humanity—this had died, and all his poetry suffered from its death. We can trace the decay which preceded its dissolution even in the later poems of this book; and after the terrible Ode, terrible in failure,*

* I have kept in this book the *Thanksgiving Ode*, and also those melancholy failures—the Sonnets and Poems of 1813-16—because Wordsworth afterwards included them in this section of his poems. But the Odes and the Sonnets after 1811 were published separately in 1816, and do not properly belong to the Sonnets which precede them, nor indeed to the Wordsworth who wrote those preceding Sonnets. They close with Sonnet xxxiii. of the *Second Part*, and, as its verses show, it is the Epilogue of the Series:

“ Here pause: the poet claims at least this praise.”

there is a dreary silence in Wordsworth's mind on all the great human questions which engaged the powers of his fiery youth and the fierce principles of his early manhood. But we may be grateful to him that he kept the poems of 1802-1810 intact, that he even collected them under their present title, and that they still speak to us in days when England needs to hear and listen to their voice.

There is scarcely one of them which has not some application to the present day ; to the position in which England has been placed before Europe and before her own past history ; to the struggle of the Cretans against a merciless and intolerable tyranny ; to the bold, if despairing remonstrance of Greece, and to the very remarkable conduct of the English Government, which has at last, as I write, ended in producing the war it desired to avoid ; and which the despotic Powers, in pretended concert with her, may have desired to create.

No attack is here made on the personal motives of those who have ranged the forces of England against the liberty of Crete to choose its own government, and the liberty of Greece to come to the succour of her child. We believe that the ministers who have, we hope for the last time in our history, mixed us up with the despots of Europe, have been actuated by a desire to do their best for their country and for the peace of the world. We do not think that they have any more liking for the Turk than we have ourselves, and we do think that the honour of England is as dear to them as it is to us. But we feel that they have been miser-

ably mistaken in their policy ; that they have sacrificed the great principles of justice and freedom to expediency and to fear of war ; and that, however the difficulties end, England has been placed before the world in a position unworthy of her present, and untrue to the noble traditions of her people. That will be the verdict of the future. And the greater part of the English people hear from far that verdict now, and feel its justice. Men and women are ashamed as they go to their business, as they walk the roads, as they sit at home. No soldier, no sailor, has fought with any joyousness, any conviction in this quarrel. I wonder what the Highlanders, unaccustomed to be employed in the repression of liberty, thought as they landed in Crete. An English Admiral's duty is obedience to orders, but there are times when obedience is as galling as the lash laid on the back of a slave. The citizens of London, even some of those who most blindly support the party of the Government, have felt they have been misrepresented. Even those who care for nothing but the pursuit of wealth have been made uneasy, like men afflicted with an obscure disease. As to the working men of England, their voice has, with scarcely a single contradiction, repudiated the disgrace of the country. The soul of the nation feels equal shame, indignation, and revolt. However things end—in peace, in the preservation of the Concert of the Powers, in an isolated war between Turkey and Greece, in the liberation of Crete and its union with Greece, or in a universal war—we have suffered dishonour.

It is thus that Wordsworth would have felt were he now alive and had the spirit he had from the age of twenty to the age of forty, from 1790 to 1810. Proof enough of this is given in the *Prelude* and in the *Sonnets* of this book. When, in 1793, England prepared for war with the Republic of France, his spirit was "overcast by dark imaginations, sense of woes to come, sorrow for human kind and pain of heart." When she declared war against the people of France, battling for their freedom against the Concert of Europe, when she too joined that Concert,

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag
In that unworthy service was prepared
To mingle . . .
Not in my single self alone I found,
But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
Change and subversion from that hour.

No shock like that had ever before been given to his moral nature; the whole world had turned to wrong; to the bottom of his soul he was ashamed. He even rejoiced when Englishmen were overthrown, driven to shameful flight. And when England asked the nation to offer up public prayer for conquest, he sat in the house of God, tossed by "a conflict of sensations without name," silent, like an uninvited guest, and hoped for the defeat of his country, nay more,

Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Universal freedom was dearer to him than a patriotism which consecrated oppression. To act with emperors and kings against a people in arms for

their national independence was an intolerable shame, and the shame affected the character of the whole people, as it affects us now.

Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear
By violence, at one decisive rent,
From the best youth of England their dear pride,
Their joy, in England.

In spite of the horrors of the *Terror*, of the bloody madness of France, in spite of his soul sick with pain of what would hereafter be brought in charge against mankind—he maintained that the cause of France was the cause of all mankind. It was the cause of national independence all over the world.

What would he then have said to England's action now? He would in these days have seen again the Concert of the Powers used against a desperate people battling for independent life, for final escape from a merciless tyranny in whose subject lands through centuries of misery *nullus ordo, sempiternus horror inhabitat*. He would have watched the fleets of England again threatening ruin and destruction to freedom, and the ministry of England in unnatural union with the despots of the Continent. Sorrow and pain of heart would again have filled his life, when he saw England in this present unhappy time—England, to whom for two centuries at least, the Divine Right of kings and aristocracies to manage the people as they willed had been the worst of lies—now supporting, even claiming that right, against the will of Crete to be free. Again he would have scorned the flimsy excuses of politicians,

and fallen back in indignation on the eternal principles of national independence and justice. And, again, he would have cried shame on the casuistry of diplomatists used to dull and confuse the natural conscience of the people of England. Yes; no one can doubt that if the Wordsworth of the years between 1802 and 1810 had been now alive, he would have appealed not to the armies, the money, or the knowledge of this country, but to the soul in it, by which alone, he said, a nation lives. It is to that, in every one of these Sonnets, that he speaks. What does the soul of England say when it sees a people, made desperate by cruelties, struggling bravely to be free, held down by the throat by England?

The answer is here, but a word of introduction is necessary. England's war against France, of which Wordsworth so bitterly disapproved in 1793, became a different thing in his eyes when France, faithless to liberty, changed, under Buonaparte, her war of self-defence for a war of conquest. In 1793 he stood against England, but when France tried to crush the national independence of Switzerland, Venice, and the rest of the States of Europe; when she became in her turn the oppressor, Wordsworth, changing his position but not his principles, stood for England, because England was at war with the enemy of freedom. And when the last opprobrium was complete, and the Pope crowned the Emperor, and France like a dog returned to its vomit, his whole heart went back to his country as the one defender of national independence and liberty.

In 1802, when these Sonnets begin, Buonaparte was made Consul for life. How deeply Wordsworth was affected by this frustration of the hopes and joy of 1790, when "the antiquated earth beat like the heart of man," will be read in the second, third, and fourth Sonnets of this book. With what tenderness, love, and hope he looked on England, now the champion of freedom, will be read in the first. It is not only patriotism which is there; it is patriotism suffused with the joy of one who sees in his country the helper of the human race; a joy of which we are, in this ill-fortuned, misdirected day, deprived.

I cannot but think that this tenderness for England—commingled with some natural fears, such vague fears as belong to love, that she might be led in the great struggle to yield even one point to any Power opposed to freedom—induced him to write that magnificent Sonnet on the fate of Venice, who had preceded England as mistress of the seas. And, in truth, if at the bidding or the pushing of autocratic States, or for fear of their power, or for any reason of political expediency, our fleets are to be used to crush the free choice by an oppressed people of its own rulers, England's greatness will become, like that of Venice, a shade that passes away. If her isolation in Europe means that she stands alone against despotism, in behalf of every effort for national freedom—in that isolation is her true power. It is by that she dominates the conscience of the world and the spiritual life of humanity. To lose that great traditional position is to lose her soul—and "what shall it profit a nation if it

gain the whole world and lose its soul!" It is her boast now that she is not isolated. She acts hand in hand with Russia, Germany, and the rest who fear these military despotisms; and she acts for the sake of the vilest of tyrants, or apparently for his sake. Her union, her concert with these Powers opposed to freedom is her shame and her folly. Her isolation at this moment should be her pride and would be her wisest policy.

Nor is the noble Sonnet to Toussaint, in which Wordsworth's genius soars like an eagle, less applicable to the present time. Greece may be imprisoned, blockaded, beaten down by the Powers, shattered in war by Turkey—yet even so let her take comfort—

Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee: air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

The Sonnet on the *Subjugation of Switzerland*, though composed in 1807, properly belongs to 1802, and is inserted by Wordsworth under the Sonnets of that year. It is perhaps the most high-hearted and imaginative cry ever addressed to Liberty. It ought to abide now in the hearts of all men who love freedom. And, indeed, Greece and Crete might justly claim it for their own. "The mountains look on Marathon, and Marathon looks on the sea." In the hearing of the mountains Thermopylæ was fought. The waves of the sea applauded the battle of Salamis.

Liberty never heard more clearly her two voices, "one of the sea, one of the mountains." Switzerland has always kept for liberty the mountain cry. Has the sea-voice of England spoken in these last days for liberty? Greece had both voices; is England now to unite with those who will prevent the mountains and the seas of Greece from crying for liberty? That were indeed a shame and grief for Liberty;

For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee!

Thus Wordsworth appeals to the soul of England; for "by the soul only are nations great and free." He believed in the invisible powers which animated England—honour, freedom, justice and pity, heroic obedience to duty, sacrifice for those ideal causes on which human progress rests. This was his great consolation when, landing in England in 1802, he watched from a valley near Dover the peaceful homes of his land, and saw the coast of France in "frightful neighbourhood." "What power," he cried, "lies there, to tread our freedom down?" Power of armies, of wealth, he answered, is, by itself, of no avail against a nation faithful to the greater powers of the soul; and the five great Sonnets xiii.-xvii., which recall England from show and wealth to plain living and high thinking, to the grandeur of simple nature, to the homely beauty of the good old cause; which speak of the heroic life of Milton; of the true wealth of virtue, freedom, power; of the great men among us

who knew how genuine glory was put on, how rightfully a nation shone in splendour, and how deeply flowed the flood of British freedom, with pomp of waters, unwithstood ; which sing of those who, still worthy of England, speak the tongue of Shakespeare and hold the faith and morals of Milton, and who must be free, or die ; which finally record his fears for England and his shame for having feared for her—are Sonnets, each a splendid monument, *perennius ære*, whose verses tell how then he felt, and how he would speak to England now were 1802 changed into 1897.

The Sonnets of 1803 strike the same note, but the undertone which is added to them is—that all these high passions of the soul of a nation cannot breathe or live except in the air of a national independence, in that air which Crete is struggling to create for herself. And full of that thought he turns in wrath on those who prevent a people from breathing that inspiring atmosphere. The men, he thinks, however highly placed, who hamper or crush a folk striving for their liberty are criminals. They violate the first law of human progress. Their success in so great a wickedness, like the success of Napoleon, would lead the world to doubt the providence of God Himself. England has done wrong, he thinks, but nothing so wrong as France. It is pitiful, but earth's best hopes rest in her alone. Let her awake, let her think that virtue and the faculties within are vital ; that riches are akin

To fear, to change, to cowardice and death.

Let her dread no more what man can say to her—

Vanguard of Liberty, ye men of Kent,
Now is the time to prove your hardiment.

When she stands firm for the liberty of the whole of Europe, she secures her own. Better to have one soul and perish to a man than that a people should have any other lord than its own reason and its own sword.

These are the words he would cry to Crete at this sharp hour, and Crete has given her answer. But what would he say to the England of to-day? What answer would its Government give to him? Not that which the Government of England gave in 1806, when, after Austerlitz and Jena, it stood all but alone, in separate pre-eminence, among the nations of Europe, against the enemy of the human race; not that answer which Wordsworth embodies in the last Sonnet of the *First Part* of this book. In ourselves, he cries, our safety must be sought. We must stand unpropped or be laid low. He is a dastard whom such foretaste does not cheer. Wise, upright, valiant be our leaders, not a servile band.

Who are to judge of danger which they fear,
And honour which they do not understand.

The *Second Part* is introduced by two Sonnets composed in 1810 on the proclamation of the liberty of Greece at the Isthmian Games by the Roman Conqueror. The Roman Commission, after Flaminius had overthrown Philip of Macedon, arrived in Greece in B.C. 196, to arrange the affairs of the country, to do

for Greece what the Concert of the Powers wishes to do for Crete. And Flaminus proclaimed, having insisted first on the terms of the peace, the liberty, and independence of Greece. Wordsworth applies the story to the events of his time, and we may still more accurately apply it. Is the gift of liberty dear, he asks, when given by a conqueror? Is that a boon worthy of joy? It cannot be *given*, he replies, by all the blended powers of earth and heaven; it must be won by a nation's independent effort. This the rough Ætolians said to Flaminus in bitter scorn, and Crete and Greece have said the same, with the same scorn, to the assembled Powers. Those who, from without, bestow autonomy on Crete insult her by the gift. It is a fresh servitude, a masquerade of liberty.

An appeal to Germany—Sonnet iv., inculcates the same lesson in 1807. In 1808 came the Convention of Cintra. Against this instrument, which allowed the French under Junot to escape by a retreat, when England, as men thought, might have wholly emancipated Spain and Portugal, Wordsworth wrote his Tract on the *Convention of Cintra*, which Canning declared to be the most eloquent production since the days of Burke. "With detestation, I may say with abhorrence," Wordsworth said, "I looked on that Convention"—not because, as at the present day, England had used her forces against a people desiring to be free, but only because she had not pushed her advantage against the oppressor to its utmost limits for the sake of the oppressed. "There was no hope," he says (and we may read into his

words Crete and Greece instead of Europe), "for the deliverance of Europe till the nations had suffered enough to be driven by a passionate recollection of all that was honourable in their past history, and to make appeal to the principles of universal and everlasting justice. These sentiments, he continues (and we may read the "Concert of Europe" for the "authors of that Convention"), the authors of that Convention most unfeelingly violated; and—as to the principles, they seemed to be as little aware even of the existence of such powers (for *powers* they may emphatically be called) as the tyrant himself. As far therefore as these men could, they put an extinguisher on the star which was then rising." This is an impeachment which fits our time. Nor does the rest of the Tract fail in this application. Wordsworth paints the "feelings of sorrow, astonishment, indignation, and shame" with which the Convention, which let the armies of the Curse of the human race escape, was received in England. What would he have said if he had then watched for many years the policy of England in support of a greater but a weaker Curse of mankind, who has now added to systematic misrule the savage murder in the last two years of more than 100,000 men, women and children, butchered to make a Turkish holiday? What sorrow, astonishment, indignation, and shame have not the people of this country felt; yes, even those who have supported at various times and under various Governments the policy which defended the integrity of Turkey! Whatever Wordsworth afterwards thought

when "disturb nothing" became the motto of his sad downfall, in 1809 he defended, with words which ought to be read to-day, the rights of oppressed peoples to claim freedom and the duty of England to support their claim. This is the practical and the wisest policy, he thinks, for the true interests of all nations. In spite of all expediency, and in the teeth of diplomatists and statesmen, whose training disenables them from taking practical views of the greater questions and from encountering with practical foresight great emergencies, the support of freedom is always right and for the best interests and progress of the nation that supports it, and the support of oppression always wrong and always injurious to the health of the nation that supports it. And once at least—when the great Whigs had as their motto, *Civil and religious liberty all over the world*—England thought that, and acted on it in times which I trust may again be to us an inspiration. .

Even the strong sentences of the Tract on the Convention "scarcely express the depth of feeling with which I entered," says Wordsworth, "into the struggle carried on by the Spaniards for their deliverance" from the French. Often, so late as two in the morning, he walked in the darkness from Allan Bank to the top of Dunmailraise to meet the carrier bringing the newspaper from Keswick. We catch a glimpse of him late at night, sitting in his summer parlour writing his Tract, while a great wind blew in the valley of Easdale. His pen has fallen from his hand, and he listens to the loud storm and the answering

torrents. The v. and vi. Sonnets of the *Second Part* record this hour of the passion of nature and of his own mind :

Here, mighty Nature ! in this school sublime
I weigh the hopes and fears of suffering Spain.

Prose is unable to express his heart ; he turns to poetry.

The Sonnets on the contest in Spain are not of Wordsworth's finest quality. They are numbered xiii. xvi., perhaps xxi., for Palafox was imprisoned at Vincennes, and xxii. to xxxi. They celebrate the noble defence of Saragossa, and the heroism of Palafox who directed it ; they mourn over the imprisonment of Palafox with the same passion but with less poetry than Wordsworth had lamented the captivity of Toussaint, and they bid him think in his cell of the triumph of his country in the four lines of the close of the xxiii. Sonnet. The Biscayan Sonnets, save that on the Oak of Guernica, are below the just level of Wordsworth, and so are those on the Spanish Guerillas ; but the best of them is that which is most applicable to our own day, when Greece and the Cretans are asked to confess the benefits, and bless the intervention of the Powers who are acting for their good. Napoleon told the Spaniards, as the Concert of the Powers has told the Cretans, that he came to deliver them ; he declared, as the Powers have declared to Crete, that the time would come when Spain, enlightened by his wisdom, would bless his sway ; he, too, imagined that national independence could be given

from without, not conquered from within; and he also, like Russia, and perhaps England, concerning Crete, thought that Spain's winning of it by her own strength would endanger his interests. Wordsworth, putting himself into the heart of "a high-minded Spaniard," states what such a man would feel. We can endure our wasted lands, the sword, the flame, the slaughter of all the brave, Spain made a wilderness—"this food a tyrant's appetite demands"; but when he speaks of giving us our freedom, of working our desolation into peace, of his benefits—

*Then the strained heart of fortitude grows weak,
Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare
That he has power to inflict what we lack strength to bear.*

And the fortitude of Crete can bear the worst from Turkey, as it has borne it for many wicked years, even to the butchery of all her women and children; but not the gifts of the despotic Powers of Europe; not to be policed into peace by Russia and Germany; not the demand from England of gratitude for the benefits of her enlightened sway, enforced by bombardment and starvation. This is the intolerable; this is an insult which breaks the heart of a free people.

There is only one benefit for Crete worth having—a free hand in making a free choice of her own government; and this is deliberately withdrawn from Crete. It is the benefit England has always claimed for herself; to maintain which she brought one king to the scaffold and drove another into exile; to gain

which her people have constitutionally struggled with success for the last seventy years:—and that she should now join hands with others in refusing it to Crete; that she should support in this matter the policy of emperors whom, were they to rule in England as they rule in Germany and Russia, she would drive like criminals from her shores; that Europe, in spite of England's diplomatic excuses, should see in her the chief protector of the worst of all the murderers who have disgraced Mohammed's name—this, for England, is to draw near to infamy; and such, if she do not repent, will be hereafter the judgment of humanity.

In the same year in which Wordsworth published his Tract on the Convention of Cintra, in 1809, and in which some of the Spanish Sonnets were produced, the Tyrolese, under Hofer, rose for their freedom, and for the last time, against the French oppression. Wordsworth's hope that all Germany would rise against it in 1807 was only realised in the Tyrol, and it was the Bavarians who finally defeated and slaughtered Hofer. The xviii. Sonnet is indignant with Austria for selling "a daughter of her Throne," but, after all, the Emperor Francis I. gave up the Tyrol because he could not help it, and against his will. The reproach, therefore, Wordsworth addresses to Austria in this Sonnet, is not quite fair.

These Sonnets to the Tyrolese are addressed to them, not as the devoted children of Austria—few people were more monarchical and conservative than

the Tyrolese—but as men in arms against the enemy of national independence ; and as mountaineers, like his own Cumbrian folk, of a simple and patriarchal life who had won and kept an inheritance of freedom. He knew but little of the war, but he knew that Hofer fought for his country's independence. It was enough for Wordsworth. He followed this uprising with eagerness and joy, and he sang with sorrow its melancholy close [ix.-xv.]. The x. Sonnet, to Liberty—"Advance—come forth from thy Tyrolean ground," is full of his brightest and most youthful genius, nor is that which follows it, on the Feelings of the Tyrolese, much behind it, either in form or exultation. Crete might take it for her own. The xiii., scarcely on the Tyrolese, yet brings the struggle in Spain into union with the struggle in the Tyrol. The soul of Spain, alit for freedom, is as great a bulwark against tyranny as the Alps of the Tyrol. The xiv. calls on England to be as true to the universal Godhead which dwells in the affections and the soul of man, as Spain and Tyrol have proved themselves to be. Hold fast, he cries, to

the eternal laws,
To which the triumph of all good is given,
High sacrifice, and labour without pause,
Even to the death.

The xv. mourns over the fate of Tyrol, as we might mourn over the fall of Crete. Yet the overthrow of these poor shepherds is not without its consolation. They "fought for a moral end," and it was not in vain.

When mighty Thrones were put to shame, these weak and simple folk earned the praise and honour of mankind. They have left behind them an inspiration of freedom, as Greece, even in defeat, will leave to us,

An impulse, and a claim
Which neither can be overturned nor bought.
Sleep, warriors, sleep! among your hills repose.

And to Greece, as to Tyrol, defeat will not make much matter. Nay, defeat is more likely than victory to give to Greece all that she justly wants. Europe, Wordsworth goes on, "impatient of her guilt and woes, will yet break forth." She did break forth, and the tyrant fell; nor in the present day will Europe long endure, as she has endured too long already, the iniquity within her borders. Crete and Greece have disturbed her soul to thought. "What!" Europe at last will say, Europe, whose conscience has so long walked in her sleep—"What, will these hands ne'er be clean?" When all the foolish work of diplomatic casuistry is burnt up by the fire of coming events, what Greece and Crete have done for liberty in Europe will live in the hearts of men.

A few strong instincts and a few plain rules
Among the herdsmen of the Alps, have wrought
More for mankind at this unhappy day
Than all the pride of intellect and thought.

This then is the voice which speaks to us from the past. It will be well with us if we listen to its call and approve its warning and remonstrance. For indeed

it is time that England should gather herself together, and, remembering her ancient honour which has always been held in the love of freedom not only for herself but for all who loved it in the world, refuse any longer to be hand and glove with autocracies in support of an Empire whose crimes have amazed the civilised world.

There are foolish persons among us whose sympathies drift back to the theories of the divine right of crowned heads and of persons called noble to use and manage the peoples as they please for the interests of their power, persons to whom the ideas of independence and liberty are a continual menace which they hate and fear; and who, openly in some kingdoms and secretly in England, support the despotisms of the Continent and even condone the felonies of Turkey. There are millionaires and commercial men among us who are led, through fear of losing their wealth, into support of the shifting policy of a Concert of Europe which has not been able to secure peace, which perhaps has provoked war, and which is at the mercy of courts who hate freedom and who fear any revolution of the oppressed in any part of the world. There is a materialised class among us, to whom Wordsworth's appeal to the soul of the nation is revolting; and indeed it is an insult to them. These folk, were it not for their material power, might be laid aside as of no weight in the world, as they are of no use to it. But England should repudiate them, and Europe should be made to understand that they do not represent the sense or the feeling of our nation.

Whatever may be said of us, and sometimes with too much justice, neither the greed of wealth, nor the love of luxury, nor the theories of the *ancien régime*, nor the extension of territory for the sake of commerce or national pride, are the things most dear to the people of England, or the things which in this great country move and direct her action in the end. That which is victorious at the last in her, that which sits closest to her breast, is the great powers of the soul of which Wordsworth speaks—self-sacrifice, duty to the great principles of justice and mercy; honour—the long descended honour of her free past; love and reverence for the souls of men, not for their outward power and wealth; the ancient principles of national independence and liberty for all nations, which of old isolated her from tyrannies, and bid her stand alone for their sake, relying for a just victory on their immortal power. She has never got any good or done any good to man when she has been betrayed for a time into sitting hand in hand with despotic Powers, with Russia, with a Germany like the present, with an imperial adventurer like Napoleon III., with the Sultan of Turkey. These are not of her family; alliances with them are unnatural to her, and unpractical. They bring disease into her body, they corrupt her society, they injure her commerce as long as it is righteous, they weaken her just power, and they degrade her honourable influence on the world.

These views are considered by many persons, and apparently by the present Government, to be mere sentiment, and to be put aside as unpractical and

foolish in domestic and still more in foreign politics. Moral questions, and the consideration of the primary passions of the soul of man for justice, pity and freedom, are to be, they think, subordinated to questions of national expediency and self-interest. On the contrary, moral and spiritual questions relating to the action of nations are the foremost practical questions ; those, the just answer to which will rule the whole future of a people and its power over mankind for use and good. The very life of a nation, its strength, the lasting success of its policy, depend on that policy being first regulated by obedience at all points to moral right and by its agreement with the just, freedom-loving, courageous, honourable and self-sacrificing instincts of the human soul. This was Wordsworth's deepest conviction when he wrote these Sonnets, and it is summed up in the last of them :

The power of armies is a visible thing.

It is the conviction, I believe, of far more than half of the English people.

PART I

I

Composed by the Sea-side, near Calais, August 1800

FAIR Star of evening, Splendour of the west,
Star of my Country!—on the horizon's brink
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England's bosom; yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,
Should'st be my Country's emblem; and should'st
wink,

Bright Star! with laughter on her banners, drest
In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, that is England; there she lies.
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory!—I, with many a fear
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

II

Calais, August 1802

Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind,
 Or what is it that ye go forth to see?
 Lords, lawyers, statesmen, squires of low degree,
 Men known, and men unknown, sick, lame, and blind,
 Post forward all, like creatures of one kind,
 With first-fruit offerings crowd to bend the knee
 In France, before the new-born Majesty.
 'Tis ever thus. Ye men of prostrate mind,
 A seemly reverence may be paid to power;
 But that's a loyal virtue, never sown
 In haste, nor springing with a transient shower:
 When truth, when sense, when liberty were flown,
 What hardship had it been to wait an hour?
 Shame on you, feeble Heads, to slavery prone!

III

Composed near Calais, on the road leading to Ardres,
 August 7, 1802

JONES!¹ as from Calais southward you and I
 Went pacing side by side, this public Way
 Streamed with the pomp of a too-credulous day,²
 When faith was pledged to new-born Liberty:
 A homeless sound of joy was in the sky:
 From hour to hour the antiquated Earth
 Beat like the heart of Man: songs, garlands, mirth,
 Banners, and happy faces, far and nigh!
 And now, sole register that these things were,
 Two solitary greetings have I heard,
 "*Good-morrow, Citizen!*" a hollow word,
 As if a dead man spake it! Yet despair
 Touches me not, though pensive as a bird
 Whose vernal coverts winter hath laid bare.

IV

1801

I GRIEVED for Buonaparte, with a vain
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood
Of that Man's mind—what can it be? what food
Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could *he* gain?
'Tis not in battles that from youth we train
The Governor who must be wise and good,
And temper with the sternness of the brain
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business; these are the degrees
By which true Sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these.

V

Calais, August 15, 1801

FESTIVALS have I seen that were not names:
This is young Buonaparte's natal day,
And his is henceforth an established sway—
Consul for life. With worship France proclaims
Her approbation, and with pomps and games.
Heaven grant that other Cities may be gay!
Calais is not: and I have bent my way
To the sea-coast, noting that each man frames
His business as he likes. Far other show
My youth here witnessed, in a prouder time;
The senselessness of joy was then sublime!
Happy is he, who, caring not for Pope,
Consul, or King, can sound himself to know
The destiny of Man, and live in hope.

VI

On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic³

ONCE did She hold the gorgeous east in fee;
 And was the safeguard of the west: the worth
 Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
 Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
 She was a maiden City, bright and free;
 No guile seduced, no force could violate;
 And, when she took unto herself a Mate,
 She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
 And what if she had seen those glories fade,
 Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;
 Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
 When her long life hath reached its final day:
 Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
 Of that which once was great is passed away.

VII

The King of Sweden⁴

THE Voice of song from distant lands shall call
 To that great King; shall hail the crownèd Youth
 Who, taking counsel of unbending Truth,
 By one example hath set forth to all
 How they with dignity may stand; or fall,
 If fall they must. Now, whither doth it tend?
 And what to him and his shall be the end?
 That thought is one which neither can appal
 Nor cheer him; for the illustrious Swede hath done
 The thing which ought to be; is raised *above*
 All consequences: work he hath begun
 Of fortitude, and piety, and love,
 Which all his glorious ancestors approve:
 The heroes bless him, him their rightful son.

VIII

To Toussaint L'Onverture⁵

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men !
Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den ;—
O miserable Chieftain ! where and when
Wilt thou find patience ? Yet die not ; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow :
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee ; air, earth, and skies ;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee ; thou hast great allies ;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

IX

September 1, 1802⁶

WE had a female Passenger who came
From Calais with us, spotless in array,—
A white-robed Negro, like a lady gay,
Yet downcast as a woman fearing blame ;
Meek, destitute, as seemed, of hope or aim
She sate, from notice turning not away,
But on all proffered intercourse did lay
A weight of languid speech, or to the same
No sign of answer made by word or face :
Yet still her eyes retained their tropic fire,
That, burning independent of the mind,
Joined with the lustre of her rich attire
To mock the Outcast—O ye Heavens, be kind !
And feel, thou Earth, for this afflicted Race !

X

Composed in the Valley near Dover, on the Day of Landing

HERE, on our native soil, we breathe once more.
 The cock that crows, the smoke that curls, that sound
 Of bells;—those boys who in yon meadow-ground
 In white-sleeved shirts are playing; and the roar
 Of the waves breaking on the chalky shore;—
 All, all are English. Oft have I looked round
 With joy in Kent's green vales; but never found
 Myself so satisfied in heart before.
 Europe is yet in bonds; but let that pass,
 Thought for another moment. Thou art free,
 My Country! and 'tis joy enough and pride
 For one hour's perfect bliss, to tread the grass
 Of England once again, and hear and see,
 With such a dear Companion at my side.

XI

September 1802. Near Dover

INLAND, within a hollow vale, I stood;
 And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,
 The coast of France—the coast of France how near!
 Drawn almost into frightful neighbourhood.
 I shrunk; for verily the barrier flood
 Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,
 A span of waters; yet what power is there!
 What mightiness for evil and for good!
 Even so doth God protect us if we be
 Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,
 Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity;
 Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
 Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul
 Only, the Nations shall be great and free.

XII

Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland

Two Voices are there ; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains ; each a mighty Voice :
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty !
There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him ; but hast vainly striven :
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft :
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left ;
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee !

XIII

Written in London, September 1802

O FRIEND ! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,
To think that now our life is only drest
For show ; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
Or groom !—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest :
The wealthiest man among us is the best :
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry ; and these we adore ;
Plain living and high thinking are no more :
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone ; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

XIV

London, 1802

MILTON ! thou should'st be living at this hour :
 England hath need of thee : she is a fen
 Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
 Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart :
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea :
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
 So didst thou travel on life's common way,
 In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

XV

GREAT men have been among us ; hands that penned
 And tongues that uttered wisdom—better none :
 The later Sidney, Marvel, Harrington,
 Young Vane, and others who called Milton friend.
 These moralists could act and comprehend ;
 They knew how genuine glory was put on ;
 Taught us how rightfully a nation shone
 In splendour : what strength was, that would not bend
 But in magnanimous meekness. France, 'tis strange,
 Hath brought forth no such souls as we had then.
 Perpetual emptiness ! unceasing change !
 No single volume paramount, no code,
 No master spirit, no determined road ;
 But equally a want of books and men !

XVI

It is not to be thought of that the Flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters, unwithstood,"
Roused though it be full often to a mood
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous Stream in bogs and sands
Should perish ; and to evil and to good
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible Knights of old :
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakspeare spake ; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.—In every thing we are sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

XVII

WHEN I have borne in memory what has tamed
Great Nations, how ennobling thoughts depart
When men change swords for ledgers, and desert
The student's bower for gold, some fears unnamed
I had, my Country !—am I to be blamed ?
Now, when I think of thee, and what thou art,
Verily, in the bottom of my heart,
Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.
For dearly must we prize thee ; we who find
In thee a bulwark for the cause of men ;
And I by my affection was beguiled :
What wonder if a Poet now and then,
Among the many movements of his mind
Felt for thee as a lover or a child !

XVIII

October 1803

ONE might believe that natural miseries
 Had blasted France, and made of it a land
 Unfit for men; and that in one great band
 Her sons were bursting forth, to dwell at ease.
 But 'tis a chosen soil, where sun and breeze
 Shed gentle favours: rural works are there,
 And ordinary business without care;
 Spot rich in all things that can soothe and please!
 How piteous then that there should be such dearth
 Of knowledge; that whole myriads should unite
 To work against themselves such fell despite:
 Should come in phrensy and in drunken mirth,
 Impatient to put out the only light
 Of Liberty that yet remains on earth!

XIX

THERE is a bondage worse, far worse, to bear
 Than his who breathes, by roof, and floor, and wall,
 Pent in, a Tyrant's solitary Thrall:
 'Tis his who walks about in the open air,
 One of a Nation who, henceforth, must wear
 Their fetters in their souls. For who could be,
 Who, even the best, in such condition, free
 From self-reproach, reproach that he must share
 With Human-nature? Never be it ours
 To see the sun how brightly it will shine,
 And know that noble feelings, manly powers,
 Instead of gathering strength, must droop and pine;
 And earth with all her pleasant fruits and flowers
 Fade, and participate in man's decline.

XX

October 1803

THESE times strike monied worldlings with dismay :
Even rich men, brave by nature, taint the air
With words of apprehension and despair :
While tens of thousands, thinking on the affray,
Men unto whom sufficient for the day
And minds not stinted or untilled are given,
Sound, healthy, children of the God of heaven,
Are cheerful as the rising sun in May.
What do we gather hence but firmer faith
That every gift of noble origin
Is breathed upon by Hope's perpetual breath ;
That virtue and the faculties within
Are vital,—and that riches are akin
To fear, to change, to cowardice, and death ?

XXI

ENGLAND ! the time is come when thou should'st wean
Thy heart from its emasculating food ;
The truth should now be better understood ;
Old things have been unsettled ; we have seen
Fair seed-time, better harvest might have been
But for thy trespasses ; and, at this day,
If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa,
Aught good were destined, thou would'st step between.
England ! all nations in this charge agree :
But worse, more ignorant in love and hate,
Far—far more abject, is thine Enemy :
Therefore the wise pray for thee, though the freight
Of thy offences be a heavy weight :
Oh grief that Earth's best hopes rest all with Thee !

XXII

October 1803

WHEN, looking on the present face of things,
 I see one Man, of men the meanest too !
 Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,
 With mighty Nations for his underlings,
 The great events with which old story rings
 Seem vain and hollow ; I find nothing great :
 Nothing is left which I can venerate ;
 So that a doubt almost within me springs
 Of Providence, such emptiness at length
 Seems at the heart of all things. But, great God !
 I measure back the steps which I have trod ;
 And tremble, seeing whence proceeds the strength
 Of such poor Instruments, with thoughts sublime
 I tremble at the sorrow of the time.

XXIII

To the Men of Kent. October 1803

VANGUARD of Liberty, ye men of Kent,
 Ye children of a Soil that doth advance
 Her haughty brow against the coast of France,
 Now is the time to prove your hardiment !
 To France be words of invitation sent !
 They from their fields can see the countenance
 Of your fierce war, may ken the glittering lance,
 And hear you shouting forth your brave intent.
 Left single, in bold parley, ye, of yore,
 Did from the Norman win a gallant wreath ;
 Confirmed the charters that were yours before ;—
 No parleying now ! In Britain is one breath ;
 We all are with you now from shore to shore :—
 Ye men of Kent, 'tis victory or death !

XXIV

WHAT if our numbers barely could defy
The arithmetic of babes, must foreign hordes,
Slaves, vile as ever were befooled by words,
Striking through English breasts the anarchy
Of Terror, bear us to the ground, and tie
Our hands behind our backs with felon cords ?
Yields every thing to discipline of swords ?
Is man as good as man, none low, none high ?—
Nor discipline nor valour can withstand
The shock, nor quell the inevitable rout,
When in some great extremity breaks out
A people, on their own beloved Land
Risen, like one man, to combat in the sight
Of a just God for liberty and right.

XXV

Lines on the expected Invasion. 1803

COME ye—who, if (which Heaven avert !) the Land
Were with herself at strife, would take your stand,
Like gallant Falkland, by the Monarch's side,
And, like Montrose, make Loyalty your pride—
Come ye—who, not less zealous, might display
Banners at enmity with regal sway,
And, like the Pym and Miltons of that day,
Think that a State would live in sounder health
If Kingship bowed its head to Commonwealth—
Ye too—whom no discreditable fear
Would keep, perhaps with many a fruitless tear,
Uncertain what to choose and how to steer—
And ye—who might mistake for sober sense
And wise reserve the plea of indolence—
Come ye—whate'er your creed—O waken all,
Whate'er your temper, at your Country's call ;
Resolving (this a free-born Nation can)
To have one Soul, and perish to a man,
Or save this honoured Land from every Lord
But British reason and the British sword.

XXVI

Anticipation. October 1803

SHOUT, for a mighty Victory is won !
On' British ground the Invaders are laid low ;
The breath of Heaven has drifted them like snow,
And left them lying in the silent sun,
Never to rise again !—the work is done.
Come forth, ye old men, now in peaceful show
And greet your sons ! drums beat and trumpets blow !
Make merry, wives ! ye little children, stun
Your grandame's ears with pleasure of your noise !
Clap, infants, clap your hands ! Divine must be
That triumph, when the very worst, the pain
And even the prospect of our brethren slain,
Hath something in it which the heart enjoys :—
In glory will they sleep and endless sanctity.

XXVII

November 1806

ANOTHER year !—another deadly blow !
Another mighty Empire overthrown !
And We are left, or shall be left, alone ;
The last that dare to struggle with the Foe.
'Tis well ! from this day forward we shall know
That in ourselves our safety must be sought ;
That by our own right hands it must be wrought ;
That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.
O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer !
We shall exult, if they who rule the land
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,
Wise, upright, valiant ; not a servile band,
Who are to judge of danger which they fear
And honour which they do not understand.

XXVIII

Ode

I

Who rises on the banks of Seine,
 And binds her temples with the civic wreath ?
 What joy to read the promise of her mien !
 How sweet to rest her widespread wings beneath !
 But they are ever playing,
 And twinkling in the light,
 And, if a breeze be straying,
 That breeze she will invite ;
 And stands on tiptoe, conscious she is fair,
 And calls a look of love into her face,
 And spreads her arms, as if the general air
 Alone could satisfy her wide embrace.
 —Melt, Principalities, before her melt !
 Her love ye hailed—her wrath have felt !
 But She through many a change of form hath gone,
 And stands amidst you now an armèd creature,
 Whose panoply is not a thing put on,
 But the live scales of a portentous nature ;
 That, having forced its way from birth to birth,
 Stalks round—abhorred by Heaven, a terror to the
 Earth !

II

I marked the breathings of her dragon crest ;
 My Soul, a sorrowful interpreter,
 In many a midnight vision bowed
 Before the ominous aspect of her spear ;
 Whether the mighty beam, in scorn upheld,
 Threatened her foes,—or, pompously at rest,
 Seemed to bisect her orbèd shield,
 As stretches a blue bar of solid cloud
 Across the setting sun and all the fiery west.

III

So did she daunt the Earth, and God defy !
And, wheresoe'er she spread her sovereignty,
Pollution tainted all that was most pure.
—Have we not known—and live we not to tell—
That Justice seemed to hear her final knell ?
Faith buried deeper in her own deep breast
Her stores, and sighed to find them insecure !
And Hope was maddened by the drops that fell
From shades, her chosen place of short-lived rest.
Shame followed shame, and woe supplanted woe—
Is this the only change that time can show ?
How long shall vengeance sleep ? Ye patient Heavens,
 how long ?
—Infirm ejaculation ! from the tongue
Of Nations wanting virtue to be strong
Up to the measure of accorded might,
And daring not to feel the majesty of right !

IV

Weak Spirits are there—who would ask,
Upon the pressure of a painful thing,
The lion's sinews, or the eagle's wing ;
Or let their wishes loose, in forest-glade,
 Among the lurking powers
 Of herbs and lowly flowers,
Or seek, from saints above, miraculous aid—
That Man may be accomplished for a task
Which his own nature hath enjoined ;—and why ?
If, when that interference hath relieved him,
 He must sink down to languish
In worse than former helplessness—and lie
 Till the caves roar,—and, imbecility
 Again engendering anguish,
The same weak wish returns that had before deceived
 him.

V

But Thou, supreme Disposer ! may'st not speed
The course of things, and change the creed
Which hath been held aloft before men's sight
Since the first framing of societies,
Whether, as bards have told in ancient song,
Built up by soft seducing harmonies ;
Or prest together by the appetite,
And by the power, of wrong.

PART II

I

On a celebrated Event in Ancient History¹

A ROMAN Master stands on Grecian ground,
And to the people at the Isthmian Games
Assembled, He, by a herald's voice, proclaims
THE LIBERTY OF GREECE :—the words rebound
Until all voices in one voice are drowned ;
Glad acclamation by which air was rent !
And birds, high flying in the element,
Dropped to the earth, astonished at the sound !
Yet were the thoughtful grieved ; and still that voice
Haunts, with sad echoes, musing Fancy's ear :
Ah ! that a *Conqueror's* words should be so dear :
Ah ! that a *boom* could shed such rapturous joys !
A gift of that which is not to be given
By all the blended powers of Earth and Heaven.

II

Upon the same Event

WHEN, far and wide, swift as the beams of morn
 The tidings passed of servitude repealed,
 And of that joy which shook the Isthmian Field,
 The rough Ætolians smiled with bitter scorn.
 "'Tis known," cried they, "that he who would adorn
 His envied temples with the Isthmian crown
 Must either win, through effort of his own,
 The prize, or be content to see it worn
 By more deserving brows.—Yet so ye prop,
 Sons of the brave who fought at Marathon,
 Your feeble spirits ! Greece her head hath bowed,
 As if the wreath of liberty thereon
 Would fix itself as smoothly as a cloud
 Which, at Jove's will, descends on Pelion's top."

III

To Thomas Clarkson, on the final passing of the Bill for the
 abolition of the Slave Trade. March 1807

CLARKSON ! it was an obstinate hill to climb :
 How toilsome—nay, how dire—it was, by thee
 Is known ; by none, perhaps, so feelingly :
 But thou, who, starting in thy fervent prime,
 Didst first lead forth that enterprise sublime,
 Hast heard the constant Voice its charge repeat,
 Which, out of thy young heart's oracular seat,
 First roused thee.—O true yoke-fellow of Time,
 Duty's intrepid liegeman, see, the palm
 Is won, and by all Nations shall be worn !
 The blood-stained Writing is for ever torn ;
 And thou henceforth wilt have a good man's calm,
 A great man's happiness ; thy zeal shall find
 Repose at length, firm friend of human kind !

IV

A Prophecy. February 1807

HIGH deeds, O Germans, are to come from you !
Thus in your books the record shall be found,
" A watchword was pronounced, a potent sound—
ARMINIUS !—all the people quaked like dew
Stirred by the breeze ; they rose, a Nation, true,
True to herself—the mighty Germany,
She of the Danube and the Northern Sea,
She rose, and off at once the yoke she threw.
All power was given her in the dreadful trance :
Those new-born Kings² she withered like a flame."
—Woe to them all ! but heaviest woe and shame
To that Bavarian who could first advance
His banner in accursed league with France,
First open traitor to the German name !

V

Composed by the Side of Grasmere Lake. 1807

CLOUDS, lingering yet, extend in solid bars
Through the grey west ; and lo ! these waters, steeled
By breezeless air to smoothest polish, yield
A vivid repetition of the stars ;
Jove, Venus, and the ruddy crest of Mars
Amid his fellows beauteously revealed
At happy distance from earth's groaning field,
Where ruthless mortals wage incessant wars.
Is it a mirror ?—or the nether Sphere
Opening to view the abyss in which she feeds
Her own calm fires ?—But list ! a voice is near ;
Great Pan himself low-whispering through the reeds,
" Be thankful, thou ; for, if unholy deeds
Ravage the world, tranquillity is here ! "

VI

Go back to antique ages, if thine eyes
 The genuine mien and character would trace
 Of the rash Spirit that still holds her place,
 Prompting the world's audacious vanities !
 Go back, and see the Tower of Babel rise ;
 The pyramid extend its monstrous base,
 For some Aspirant of our short-lived race,
 Anxious an aery name to immortalise.
 There, too, ere wiles and politic dispute
 Gave specious colouring to aim and act,
 See the first mighty Hunter leave the brute—
 To chase mankind, with men in armies packed
 For his field-pastime high and absolute,
 While, to dislodge his game, cities are sacked !

VII

Composed while the Author was engaged in writing a Tract,
 occasioned by the Convention of Cintra. 1808

Not 'mid the World's vain objects that enslave
 The free-born Soul—that World whose vaunted skill
 In selfish interest perverts the will,
 Whose factions lead astray the wise and brave—
 Not there ; but in dark wood and rocky cave,
 And hollow vale which foaming torrents fill
 With omnipresent murmur as they rave
 Down their steep beds, that never shall be still ;
 Here, mighty Nature ! in this school sublime
 I weigh the hopes and fears of suffering Spain ;
 For her consult the auguries of time,
 And through the human heart explore my way ;
 And look and listen—gathering, whence I may,
 Triumph, and thoughts no bondage can restrain.

VIII

Composed at the same time and on the same occasion

I DROPPED my pen ; and listened to the Wind
That sang of trees up-torn and vessels tost—
A midnight harmony ; and wholly lost
To the general sense of men by chains confined
Of business, care, or pleasure ; or resigned
To timely sleep. Thought I, the impassioned strain,
Which, without aid of numbers, I sustain,
Like acceptance from the World will find.
Yet some with apprehensive ear shall drink
A dirge devoutly breathed o'er sorrows past ;
And to the attendant promise will give heed—
The prophecy,—like that of this wild blast,
Which, while it makes the heart with sadness shrink,
Tells also of bright calms that shall succeed.

IX

Hofer³

OF mortal parents is the Hero born
By whom the undaunted Tyrolese are led ?
Or is it Tell's great Spirit, from the dead
Returned to animate an age forlorn ?
He comes like Phœbus through the gates of morn
When dreary darkness is discomfited,
Yet mark his modest state ! upon his head,
That simple crest, a heron's plume, is worn.
O Liberty ! they stagger at the shock
From van to rear—and with one mind would flee,
But half their host is buried :—rock on rock
Descends :—beneath this godlike Warrior, see !
Hills, torrents, woods, embodied to bemock
The Tyrant, and confound his cruelty.

X

ADVANCE—come forth from thy Tyrolean ground,
 Dear Liberty ! stern Nymph of soul untamed ;
 Sweet Nymph, O rightly of the mountains named !
 Through the long chain of Alps from mound to mound
 And o'er the eternal snows, like Echo, bound ;
 Like Echo, when the hunter train at dawn
 Have roused her from her sleep : and forest-lawn,
 Cliffs, woods and caves, her viewless steps resound
 And babble of her pastime !—On, dread Power !
 With such invisible motion speed thy flight,
 Through hanging clouds, from craggy height to height,
 Through the green vales and through the herdsman's
 bower—

That all the Alps may gladden in thy might,
 Here, there, and in all places at one hour.

XI

Feelings of the Tyrolese

THE Land we from our fathers had in trust,
 And to our children will transmit, or die ;
 This is our maxim, this our piety ;
 And God and Nature say that it is just.
 That which we *would* perform in arms—we must !
 We read the dictate in the infant's eye ;
 In the wife's smile ; and in the placid sky ;
 And, at our feet, amid the silent dust
 Of them that were before us.—Sing aloud
 Old songs, the precious music of the heart !
 Give, herds and flocks, your voices to the wind !
 While we go forth, a self-devoted crowd,
 With weapons grasped in fearless hands, to assert
 Our virtue, and to vindicate mankind,

XII

ALAS ! what boots the long laborious quest
Of moral prudence, sought through good and ill ;
Or pains abstruse—to elevate the will,
And lead us on to that transcendent rest
Where every passion shall the sway attest
Of Reason, seated on her sovereign hill ;
What is it but a vain and curious skill,
If sapient Germany must lie deprest,
Beneath the brutal sword ?—Her haughty Schools
Shall blush ; and may not we with sorrow say—
A few strong instincts and a few plain rules,
Among the herdsmen of the Alps, have wrought
More for mankind at this unhappy day
Than all the pride of intellect and thought ?

XIII

AND is it among rude untutored Dales,
There, and there only, that the heart is true ?
And, rising to repel or to subdue,
Is it by rocks and woods that man prevails ?
Ah no ! though Nature's dread protection fails,
There is a bulwark in the soul. This knew
Iberian Burghers when the sword they drew
In Zaragoza, naked to the gales
Of fiercely-breathing war. The truth was felt
By Palafox,⁴ and many a brave compeer,
Like him of noble birth and noble mind ;
By ladies, meek-eyed women without fear ;
And wanderers of the street, to whom is dealt
The bread which without industry they find,

XIV

O'ER the wide earth, on mountain and on plain,
 Dwells in the affections and the soul of man
 A Godhead, like the universal PAN;
 But more exalted, with a brighter train:
 And shall his bounty be dispensed in vain,
 Showered equally on city and on field,
 And neither hope nor steadfast promise yield
 In these usurping times of fear and pain?
 Such doom awaits us. Nay, forbid it, Heaven!
 We know the arduous strife, the eternal laws
 To which the triumph of all good is given,
 High sacrifice, and labour without pause,
 Even to the death:—else wherefore should the eye
 Of man converse with immortality?

XV

On the Final Submission of the Tyrolese

It was a *moral* end for which they fought;
 Else how, when mighty Thrones were put to shame,
 Could they, poor Shepherds, have preserved an aim,
 A resolution, or enlivening thought?
 Nor hath that moral good been *vainly* sought;
 For in their magnanimity and fame
 Powers have they left, an impulse, and a claim
 Which neither can be overturned nor bought.
 Sleep, Warriors, sleep! among your hills repose!
 We know that ye, beneath the stern control
 Of awful prudence, keep the unvanquished soul:
 And when, impatient of her guilt and woes,
 Europe breaks forth; then, Shepherds! shall ye rise
 For perfect triumph o'er your Enemies.

XVI

HAIL, Zaragoza ! If with unwet eye
We can approach, thy sorrow to behold,
Yet is the heart not pitiless nor cold ;
Such spectacle demands not tear or sigh.
These desolate remains are trophies high
Of more than martial courage in the breast
Of peaceful civic virtue : they attest
Thy matchless worth to all posterity.
Blood flowed before thy sight without remorse ;
Disease consumed thy vitals ; War upheaved
The ground beneath thee with volcanic force :
Dread trials ! yet encountered and sustained
Till not a wreck of help or hope remained,
And law was from necessity received.

XVII

SAY, what is Honour ?—'Tis the finest sense
Of *justice* which the human mind can frame,
Intent each lurking frailty to disclaim,
And guard the way of life from all offence
Suffered or done. When lawless violence
Invades a Realm, so pressed that in the scale
Of perilous war her weightiest armies fail,
Honour is hopeful elevation,—whence
Glory, and triumph. Yet with politic skill
Endangered States may yield to terms unjust ;
Stoop their proud heads, but not unto the dust—
A Foe's most favourite purpose to fulfil :
Happy occasions oft by self-mistrust
Are forfeited ; but infamy doth kill.

XVIII

THE martial courage of a day is vain,
 An empty noise of death the battle's roar,
 If vital hope be wanting to restore,
 Or fortitude be wanting to sustain,
 Armies or kingdoms. We have heard a strain
 Of triumph, how the labouring Danube bore
 A weight of hostile corpses; drenched with gore
 Were the wide fields, the hamlets heaped with slain.
 Yet see (the mighty tumult overpast)
 Austria a Daughter of her Throne hath sold !
 And her Tyrolean Champion we behold
 Murdered, like one ashore by shipwreck cast,
 Murdered without relief. Oh ! blind as bold,
 To think that such assurance can stand fast !

XIX

BRAVE Schill !⁵ by death delivered, take thy flight
 From Prussia's timid region. Go, and rest
 With heroes, 'mid the islands of the Blest,
 Or in the fields of empyrean light.
 A meteor wert thou crossing a dark night :
 Yet shall thy name, conspicuous and sublime,
 Stand in the spacious firmament of time,
 Fixed as a star : such glory is thy right.
 Alas ! it may not be : for earthly fame
 Is Fortune's frail dependent ; yet there lives
 A Judge who, as man claims by merit, gives ;
 To whose all-pondering mind a noble aim,
 Faithfully kept, is as a noble deed ;
 In whose pure sight all virtue doth succeed.

XX

CALL not the royal Swede unfortunate,⁶
Who never did to Fortune bend the knee ;
Who slighted fear ; rejected steadfastly
Temptation ; and whose kingly name and state
Have "perished by his choice, and not his fate !"
Hence lives He, to his inner self endeared ;
And hence, wherever virtue is revered,
He sits a more exalted Potentate,
Throned in the hearts of men. Should Heaven ordain
That this great Servant of a righteous cause
Must still have sad or vexing thoughts to endure,
Yet may a sympathising spirit pause,
Admonished by these truths, and quench all pain
In thankful joy and gratulation pure.

XXI

Look now on that Adventurer who hath paid
His vows to Fortune ; who, in cruel slight
Of virtuous hope, of liberty, and right,
Hath followed whereso'er a way was made
By the blind Goddess,—ruthless, undismayed ;
And so hath gained at length a prosperous height,
Round which the elements of worldly might
Beneath his haughty feet, like clouds, are laid.
O joyless power that stands by lawless force !
Curses are his dire portion, scorn, and hate,
Internal darkness and unquiet breath ;
And, if old judgments keep their sacred course,
Him from that height shall Heaven precipitate
By violent and ignominious death.

XXII

Is there a power that can sustain and cheer
 The captive chieftain, by a tyrant's doom,
 Forced to descend into his destined tomb—
 A dungeon dark ! where he must waste the year,
 And lie cut off from all his heart holds dear ;
 What time his injured country is a stage
 Whereon deliberate Valour and the rage
 Of righteous Vengeance side by side appear,
 Filling from morn to night the heroic scene
 With deeds of hope and everlasting praise :—
 Say can he think of this with mind serene
 And silent fetters ? Yes, if visions bright
 Shine on his soul, reflected from the days
 When he himself was tried in open light.

XXIII

1810

Ah ! where is Palafox ? Nor tongue nor pen
 Reports of him, his dwelling or his grave !
 Does yet the unheard-of vessel ride the wave ?
 Or is she swallowed up, remote from ken
 Of pitying human nature ? Once again
 Methinks that we shall hail thee, Champion brave,
 Redeemed to baffle that imperial Slave,
 And through all Europe cheer desponding men
 With new-born hope. Unbounded is the might
 Of martyrdom, and fortitude, and right.
 Hark, how thy Country triumphs !—Smilingly
 The Eternal looks upon her sword that gleams,
 Like his own lightning, over mountains high,
 On rampart, and the banks of all her streams.

XXIV

IN due observance of an ancient rite,
The rude Biscayans, when their children lie
Dead in the sinless time of infancy,
Attire the peaceful corse in vestments white ;
And, in like sign of cloudless triumph bright,
They bind the unoffending creature's brows
With happy garlands of the pure white rose :
Then do a festal company unite
In choral song ; and, while the uplifted cross
Of Jesus goes before, the child is borne
Uncovered to his grave : 'tis closed,—her loss
The Mother *then* mourns, as she needs must mourn ;
But soon, 'through Christian faith, is grief subdued !
And joy returns, to brighten fortitude.

XXV

Feelings of a Noble Biscayan at one of those Funerals. 1810

YET, yet, Biscayans ! we must meet our Foes
With firmer soul, yet labour to regain
Our ancient freedom ; else 'twere worse than vain
To gather round the bier these festal shows.
A garland fashioned of the pure white rose
Becomes not one whose father is a slave :
Oh, bear the infant covered to his grave !
These venerable mountains now enclose
A people sunk in apathy and fear.
If this endure, farewell, for us, all good !
The awful light of heavenly innocence
Will fail to illuminate the infant's bier ;
And guilt and shame, from which is no defence,
Descend on all that issues from our blood.

XXVI

The Oak of Guernica. 1810⁷

OAK of Guernica ! Tree of holier power
 Than that which in Dodona did enshrine
 (So faith too fondly deemed) a voice divine
 Heard from the depths of its ærial bower—
 How canst thou flourish at this blighting hour ?
 What hope, what joy can sunshine bring to thee,
 Or the soft breezes from the Atlantic sea,
 The dews of morn, or April's tender shower ?
 Stroke merciful and welcome would that be
 Which should extend thy branches on the ground,
 If never more within their shady round
 Those lofty-minded Lawgivers shall meet,
 Peasant and lord, in their appointed seat,
 Guardians of Biscay's ancient liberty.

XXVII

Indignation of a High-minded Spaniard. 1810

WE can endure that He should waste our lands,
 Despoil our temples, and by sword and flame
 Return us to the dust from which we came ;
 Such food a Tyrant's appetite demands :
 And we can brook the thought that by his hands
 Spain may be overpowered, and he possess,
 For his delight, a solemn wilderness
 Where all the brave lie dead. But, when of bands
 Which he will break for us he dares to speak,
 Of benefits, and of a future day
 When our enlightened minds shall bless his sway ;
Then, the strained heart of fortitude proves weak ;
 Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare
 That he has power to inflict what we lack strength to
 bear.

XXVIII

AVAUNT all specious pliancy of mind
In men of low degree, all smooth pretence !
I better like a blunt indifference,
And self-respecting slowness, disinclined
To win me at first sight : and be there joined
Patience and temperance with this high reserve,
Honour that knows the path and will not swerve ;
Affections, which, if put to proof, are kind ;
And piety towards God. Such men of old
Were England's native growth ; and, throughout Spain,
(Thanks to high God) forests of such remain :
Then for that Country let our hopes be bold ;
For matched with these shall policy prove vain,
Her arts, her strength, her iron, and her gold.

XXIX

1810

O'ERWEENING Statesmen have full long relied
On fleets and armies, and external wealth :
But from *within* proceeds a Nation's health ;
Which shall not fail, though poor men cleave with
pride
To the paternal floor ; or turn aside,
In the thronged city, from the walks of gain,
As being all unworthy to detain
A Soul by contemplation sanctified.
There are who cannot languish in this strife,
Spaniards of every rank, by whom the good
Of such high course was felt and understood ;
Who to their Country's cause have bound a life
Erewhile, by solemn consecration, given
To labour and to prayer, to nature, and to heaven.

XXX

The French and the Spanish Guerillas¹

HUNGER, and sultry heat, and nipping blast
 From bleak hill-top, and length of march by night
 Through heavy swamp, or over snow-clad height—
 These hardships ill-sustained, these dangers past,
 The roving Spanish Bands are reached at last,
 Charged, and dispersed like foam : but as a flight
 Of scattered quails by signs do reunite,
 So these,—and, heard of once again, are chased
 With combinations of long-practised art
 And newly-kindled hope ; but they are fled—
 Gone are they, viewless as the buried dead :
 Where now ?—Their sword is at the Foeman's heart !
 And thus from year to year his walk they thwart
 And hang like dreams around his guilty bed.

XXXI

Spanish Guerillas. 1811

THEY seek, are sought ; to daily battle led,
 Shrink not, though far outnumbered by their Foes,
 For they have learnt to open and to close
 The ridges of grim war ; and at their head
 Are captains such as erst their country bred
 Or fostered, self-supported chiefs,—like those
 Whom hardy Rome was fearful to oppose ;
 Whose desperate shock the Carthaginian fled.
 In One who lived unknown a shepherd's life
 Redoubted Viriatus breathes again ;
 And Mina, nourished in the studious shade,
 With that great Leader vies, who, sick of strife
 And bloodshed, longed in quiet to be laid
 In some green island of the western main.

XXXII

1811

THE power of Armies is a visible thing,
Formal, and circumscribed in time and space;
But who the limits of that power shall trace
Which a brave People into light can bring
Or hide, at will,—for freedom combating
By just revenge inflamed? No foot may chase,
No eye can follow, to a fatal place
That power, that spirit, whether on the wing
Like the strong wind, or sleeping like the wind
Within its awful caves.—From year to year
Springs this indigenous produce far and near;
No craft this subtle element can bind,
Rising like water from the soil, to find
In every nook a lip that it may cheer.

XXXIII

1811

HERE pause: the poet claims at least this praise,
That virtuous Liberty hath been the scope
Of his pure song, which did not shrink from hope
In the worst moment of these evil days;
From hope, the paramount *duty* that Heaven lays,
For its own honour, on man's suffering heart.
Never may from our souls one truth depart—
That an accursed thing it is to gaze
On prosperous tyrants with a dazzled eye;
Nor—touched with due abhorrence of *their* guilt
For whose dire ends tears flow, and blood is spilt,
And justice labours in extremity—
Forget thy weakness, upon which is built,
O wretched man, the throne of tyranny!

XXXIV

The French Army in Russia. 1812-13

HUMANITY, delighting to behold
 A fond reflection of her own decay,
 Hath painted Winter like a traveller old,
 Propped on a staff, and, through the sullen day,
 In hooded mantle, limping o'er the plain,
 As though his weakness were disturbed by pain :
 Or, if a juster fancy should allow
 An undisputed symbol of command,
 The chosen sceptre is a withered bough,
 Infirmlly grasped within a palsied hand.
 These emblems suit the helpless and forlorn ;
 But mighty Winter the device shall scorn.

For he it was—dread Winter ! who beset,
 Flinging round van and rear his ghastly net,
 That host, when from the regions of the Pole
 They shrunk, insane ambition's barren goal—
 That host, as huge and strong as e'er defied
 Their God, and placed their trust in human pride !
 As fathers persecute rebellious sons,
 He smote the blossoms of their warrior youth ;
 He called on Frost's inexorable tooth
 Life to consume in Manhood's firmest hold ;
 Nor spared the reverend blood that feebly runs ;
 For why—unless for liberty enrolled
 And sacred home—ah ! why should hoary Age be bold ?
 Fleet the Tartar's reinless steed,
 But fleeter far the pinions of the Wind,
 Which from Siberian caves the Monarch freed,
 And sent him forth, with squadrons of his kind,
 And bade the Snow their ample backs bestride,
 And to the battle ride.
 No pitying voice commands a halt,

No courage can repel the dire assault ;
Distracted, spiritless, benumbed, and blind,
Whole legions sink—and, in one instant, find
Burial and death : look for them—and descry,
When morn returns, beneath the clear blue sky,
A soundless waste, a trackless vacancy !

XXXV

On the same occasion

YE Storms, resound the praises of your King !
And ye mild Seasons—in a sunny clime,
Midway on some high hill, while father Time
Looks on delighted—meet in festal ring,
And loud and long of Winter's triumph sing !
Sing ye, with blossoms crowned, and fruits and flowers,
Of Winter's breath surcharged with sleety showers,
And the dire flapping of his hoary wing !
Knit the blithe dance upon the soft green grass ;
With feet, hands, eyes, looks, lips, report your gain ;
Whisper it to the billows of the main,
And to the aërial zephyrs as they pass,
That old decrepit Winter—*He* hath slain
That Host, which rendered all your bounties vain !

XXXVI

By Moscow self-devoted to a blaze
 Of dreadful sacrifice ; by Russian blood
 Lavished in fight with desperate hardihood ;
 The unfeeling Elements no claim shall raise
 To rob our Human-nature of just praise
 For what she did and suffered. Pledges sure
 Of a deliverance absolute and pure
 She gave, if Faith might tread the beaten ways
 Of Providence. But now did the Most High
 Exalt his still small voice ;—to quell that Host
 Gathered his power, a manifest ally ;
 He, whose heaped waves confounded the proud boast
 Of Pharaoh, said to Famine, Snow, and Frost,
 “ Finish the strife by deadliest victory ! ”

XXXVII

The Germans on the Heights of Hock Heim

ABRUPTLY paused the strife ;—the field throughout
 Resting upon his arms each warrior stood,
 Checked in the very act and deed of blood,
 With breath suspended, like a listening scout.
 O Silence ! thou wert mother of a shout
 That through the texture of yon azure dome
 Cleaves its glad way, a cry of harvest home
 Uttered to heaven in ecstasy devout !
 The barrier Rhine hath flashed, through battle-smoke,
 On men who gaze heart-smitten by the view,
 As if all Germany had felt the shock !
 —Fly, wretched Gauls ! ere they the charge renew
 Who have seen—themselves now casting off the yoke—
 The unconquerable Stream his course pursue.

XXXVIII

November 1813

Now that all hearts are glad, all faces bright,
 Our aged Sovereign sits, to the ebb and flow
 Of states and kingdoms, to their joy or woe,
 Insensible. He sits deprived of sight,
 And lamentably wrapt in twofold night,
 Whom no weak hopes deceived ; whose mind ensued,
 Through perilous war, with regal fortitude,
 Peace that should claim respect from lawless Might.
 Dread King of Kings, vouchsafe a ray divine
 To his forlorn condition ! let thy grace
 Upon his inner soul in mercy shine ;
 Permit his heart to kindle, and to embrace
 (Though it were only for a moment's space)
 The triumphs of this hour ; for they are THINE !

XXXIX

Ode. 1814

————— *Carmina possumus*
Donare, et pretium dicere muneri.
Non incisa notis marmora publicis,
Per quæ spiritus et vita redit bonis
Post mortem ducibus
 ————— *clarius indicant*
Laudes, quam ————— Pierides ; neque,
Si chartæ sileant quod bene feceris,
Mercedem tuleris. — HOR. Car. 8. Lib. 4.

I

WHEN the soft hand of sleep had closed the latch
 On the tired household of corporeal sense,

And Fancy, keeping unreluctant watch,
 Was free her choicest favours to dispense ;
 I saw, in wondrous perspective displayed,
 A landscape more august than happiest skill
 Of pencil ever clothed with light and shade ;
 An intermingled pomp of vale and hill,
 City, and naval stream, suburban grove,
 And stately forest where the wild deer rove ;
 Nor wanted lurking hamlet, dusky towns,
 And scattered rural farms of aspect bright ;
 And, here and there, between the pastoral downs,
 The azure sea upswelled upon the sight.
 Fair prospect, such as Britain only shows !
 But not a living creature could be seen
 Through its wide circuit, that, in deep repose,
 And, even to sadness, lonely and serene,
 Lay hushed ; till—through a portal in the sky
 Brighter than brightest loop-hole, in a storm,
 Opening before the sun's triumphant eye—
 Issued, to sudden view, a glorious Form !
 Earthward it glided with a swift descent :
 Saint George himself this Visitant must be ;
 And, ere a thought could ask on what intent
 He sought the regions of humanity,
 A thrilling voice was heard, that vivified
 City and field and flood ;—aloud it cried—

" Though from my celestial home,
 Like a Champion, armed I come ;
 On my helm the dragon crest,
 And the red cross on my breast ;
 I, the Guardian of this Land,
 Speak not now of toilsome duty ;
 Well obeyed was that command—
 Whence bright days of festive beauty ;

Haste, Virgins, haste !—the flowers which summer gave
Have perished in the field ;
But the green thickets plenteously shall yield
Fit garlands for the brave,
That will be welcome, if by you entwined ;
Haste, Virgins, haste ; and you, ye Matrons grave,
Go forth with rival youthfulness of mind,
And gather what ye find
Of hardy laurel and wild holly boughs—
To deck your stern Defenders' modest brows !
Such simple gifts prepare,
Though they have gained a worthier meed ;
And in due time shall share
Those palms and amaranthine wreaths
Unto their martyred Countrymen decreed,
In realms where everlasting freshness breathes !”

II

And lo ! with crimson banners proudly streaming,
And upright weapons innocently gleaming,
Along the surface of a spacious plain
Advance in order the redoubted Bands,
And there receive green chaplets from the hands
Of a fair female train—
Maids and Matrons, dight
In robes of dazzling white ;
While from the crowd bursts forth a rapturous noise
By the cloud-capt hills retorted ;
And a throng of rosy boys
In loose fashion tell their joys ;
And grey-haired sires, on staffs supported,
Look round, and by their smiling seem to say,
Thus strives a grateful Country to display
The mighty debt which nothing can repay !

III

Anon before my sight a palace rose
 Built of all precious substances,—so pure
 And exquisite, that sleep alone bestows
 Ability like splendour to endure :
 Entered, with streaming thousands, through the gate,
 I saw the banquet spread beneath a Dome of state,
 A lofty Dome, that dared to emulate
 The heaven of sable night
 With starry lustre ; yet had power to throw
 Solemn effulgence, clear as solar light,
 Upon a princely company below,
 While the vault rang with choral harmony,
 Like some Nymph-haunted grot beneath the roaring sea.
 —No sooner ceased that peal, than on the verge
 Of exultation hung a dirge
 Breathed from a soft and lonely instrument,
 That kindled recollections
 Of agonised affections ;
 And, though some tears the strain attended,
 The mournful passion ended
 In peace of spirit, and sublime content !

IV

But garlands wither ; festal shows depart,
 Like dreams themselves ; and sweetest sound—
 (Albeit of effect profound)
 It was—and it is gone !
 Victorious England ! bid the silent Art
 Reflect, in glowing hues that shall not fade,
 Those high achievements ; even as she arrayed
 With second life the deed of Marathon
 Upon Athenian walls ;
 So may she labour for thy civic halls :

And be the guardian spaces
Of consecrated places
As nobly graced by Sculpture's patient toil ;
And let imperishable Columns rise
Fixed in the depths of this courageous soil ;
Expressive signals of a glorious strife,
And competent to shed a spark divine
Into the torpid breast of daily life ;—
Records on which, for pleasure of all eyes,
The morning sun may shine
With gratulation thoroughly benign !

v

And ye, Pierian Sisters, sprung from Jove
And sage Mnemosyne,—full long debarred
From your first mansions, exiled all too long
From many a hallowed stream and grove,
Dear native regions where ye wont to rove,
Chanting for patriot heroes the reward
Of never-dying song !
Now (for, though Truth descending from above
The Olympian summit hath destroyed for aye
Your kindred Deities, Ye live and move,
Spared for obeisance from perpetual love
For privilege redeemed of godlike sway)
Now, on the margin of some spotless fountain,
Or top serene of unmolested mountain,
Strike audibly the noblest of your lyres,
And for a moment meet the soul's desires !
That I, or some more favoured Bard, may hear
What ye, celestial Maids ! have often sung
Of Britain's acts,—may catch it with rapt ear,
And give the treasure to our British tongue !
So shall the characters of that proud page
Support their mighty theme from age to age ;

And, in the desert places of the earth,
 When they to future empires have given birth,
 So shall the people gather and believe
 The bold report, transferred to every clime ;
 And the whole world, not envious but admiring,
 And to the like aspiring,

Own—that the progeny of this fair Isle
 Had power as lofty actions to achieve
 As were performed in man's heroic prime ;
 Nor wanted, when their fortitude had held
 Its even tenor, and the foe was quelled,
 A corresponding virtue to beguile
 The hostile purpose of wide-wasting Time—
 That not in vain they laboured to secure,
 For their great deeds, perpetual memory,
 And fame as largely spread as land and sea,
 By Works of spirit high and passion pure !

XL

Feelings of a French Royalist on the Disinterment of the
 Remains of the Duke d'Enghien

DEAR Reliques ! from a pit of vilest mould
 Uprisen—to lodge among ancestral kings ;
 And to inflict shame's salutary stings
 On the remorseless hearts of men grown old
 In a blind worship ; men perversely bold
 Even to this hour,—yet, some shall now forsake
 Their monstrous Idol if the dead e'er spake,
 To warn the living ; if truth were ever told
 By aught redeemed out of the hollow grave :
 O murdered Prince ! meek, loyal, pious, brave !
 The power of retribution once was given :
 But 'tis a rueful thought that willow bands
 So often tie the thunder-wielding hands
 Of Justice sent to earth from highest Heaven !

XLI

Occasioned by the Battle of Waterloo. February 1816

INTREPID sons of Albion ! not by you
Is life despised ; ah no, the spacious earth
Ne'er saw a race who held, by right of birth,
So many objects to which love is due :
Ye slight not life—to God and Nature true ;
But death, becoming death, is dearer far,
When duty bids you bleed in open war :
Hence hath your prowess quelled that impious crew.
Heroes !—for instant sacrifice prepared ;
Yet filled with ardour and on triumph bent
'Mid direct shocks of mortal accident—
To you who fell, and you whom slaughter spared
To guard the fallen, and consummate the event,
Your Country rears this sacred Monument !

XLII

Siege of Vienna raised by John Sobieski. February 1816

O, FOR a kindling touch from that pure flame
Which ministered, erewhile, to a sacrifice
Of gratitude, beneath Italian skies,
In words like these : “ Up, Voice of song ! proclaim
Thy saintly rapture with celestial aim :
For lo ! the Imperial City stands released
From bondage threatened by the embattled East,
And Christendom respire ; from guilt and shame
Redeemed, from miserable fear set free
By one day's feat, one mighty victory.
—Chant the Deliverer's praise in every tongue !
The cross shall spread, the crescent hath waxed dim ;
He conquering, as in joyful Heaven is sung,
HE CONQUERING THROUGH GOD, AND GOD BY HIM.”

XLIII

Occasioned by the Battle of Waterloo. February 1816

THE Bard—whose soul is meek as dawning day,
 Yet trained to judgments righteously severe,
 Fervid, yet conversant with holy fear,
 As recognising one Almighty sway :
 He—whose experienced eye can pierce the array
 Of past events ; to whom, in vision clear,
 The aspiring heads of future things appear,
 Like mountain-tops whose mists have rolled away—
 Assoiled from all encumbrance of our time,
 He only, if such breathe, in strains devout
 Shall comprehend this victory sublime ;
 Shall worthily rehearse the hideous rout,
 The triumph hail, which from their peaceful clime
 Angels might welcome with a choral shout !

XLIV

EMPERORS and Kings, how oft have temples rung
 With impious thanksgiving, the Almighty's scorn !
 How oft above their altars have been hung
 Trophies that led the good and wise to mourn
 Triumphant wrong, battle of battle born,
 And sorrow that to fruitless sorrow clung !
 Now, from Heaven-sanctioned victory, Peace is sprung ;
 In this firm hour Salvation lifts her horn.
 Glory to arms ! But, conscious that the nerve
 Of popular reason, long mistrusted, freed
 Your thrones, ye Powers, from duty fear to swerve !
 Be just, be grateful ; nor, the oppressor's creed
 Reviving, heavier chastisement deserve
 Than ever forced unpitied hearts to bleed.

XLV

Ode. 1815

I

IMAGINATION—ne'er before content,
But aye ascending, restless in her pride
From all that martial feats could yield
To her desires, or to her hopes present—
Stooped to the Victory, on that Belgic field,
Achieved, this closing deed magnificent,
And with the embrace was satisfied.

—Fly, ministers of Fame,
With every help that ye from earth and heaven may
claim !

Bear through the world these tidings of delight !
—Hours, Days, and Months, *have* borne them in the sight
Of mortals, hurrying like a sudden shower
That land-ward stretches from the sea,
The morning's splendours to devour ;
But this swift travel scorns the company
Of irksome change, or threats from saddening power.

—*The shock is given—the Adversaries bleed—*

Lo, Justice triumphs ! Earth is freed !

Joyful annunciation !—it went forth—
It pierced the caverns of the sluggish North—
It found no barrier on the ridge
Of Andes—frozen gulphs became its bridge—
The vast Pacific gladdens with the freight—
Upon the Lakes of Asia 'tis bestowed—
The Arabian desert shapes a willing road
Across her burning breast,

For this refreshing incense from the West !—

—Where snakes and lions breed,

Where towns and cities thick as stars appear,
Wherever fruits are gathered, and where'er
The upturned soil receives the hopeful seed—

While the Sun rules, and cross the shades of night—
 The unwearied arrow hath pursued its flight !
 The eyes of good men thankfully give heed,
 And in its sparkling progress read
 Of virtue crowned with glory's deathless meed :
 Tyrants exult to hear of kingdoms won,
 And slaves are pleased to learn that mighty feats are
 done ;
 Even the proud Realm, from whose distracted borders
 This messenger of good was launched in air,
 France, humbled France, amid her wild disorders,
 Feels, and hereafter shall the truth declare,
 That she too lacks not reason to rejoice,
 And utter England's name with sadly-plausive voice.

II

O genuine glory, pure renown !
 And well might it beseem that mighty Town
 Into whose bosom earth's best treasures flow,
 To whom all persecuted men retreat ;
 If a new Temple lift her votive brow
 High on the shore of silver Thames—to greet
 The peaceful guest advancing from afar:
 Bright be the Fabric, as a star
 Fresh risen, and beautiful within !—there meet
 Dependence infinite, proportion just ;
 A Pile that Grace approves, and Time can trust
 With his most sacred wealth, heroic dust.

III

But if the valiant of this land
In reverential modesty demand,
That all observance, due to them, be paid
Where their serene progenitors are laid ;
Kings, warriors, high-souled poets, saint-like sages,
England's illustrious sons of long, long ages ;
Be it not unordained that solemn rites,
Within the circuit of those Gothic walls,
Shall be performed at pregnant intervals ;
Commemoration holy that unites
The living generations with the dead ;
 By the deep soul-moving sense
 Of religious eloquence,—
 By visual pomp, and by the tie
 Of sweet and threatening harmony ;
 Soft notes, awful as the omen
 Of destructive tempests coming,
 And escaping from that sadness
 Into elevated gladness ;
 While the white-robed choir attendant,
 Under mouldering banners pendant,
Provoke all potent symphonies to raise
 Songs of victory and praise,
For them who bravely stood unhurt, or bled
With medicable wounds, or found their graves
Upon the battlefield, or under ocean's waves ;
Or were conducted home in single state,
And long procession—there to lie,
Where their sons' sons, and all posterity,
Unheard by them, their deeds shall celebrate !

IV

Nor will the God of peace and love
Such martial service disapprove.
He guides the Pestilence—the cloud
Of locusts travels on his breath ;
The region that in hope was ploughed
His drought consumes, his mildew taints with death ;
He springs the hushed Volcano's mine,
He puts the Earthquake on her still design,
Darkens the sun, hath bade the forest sink,
And, drinking towns and cities, still can drink
Cities and towns—'tis Thou—the work is Thine !—
The fierce Tornado sleeps within thy courts—
He hears the word—he flies—
And navies perish in their ports ;
For Thou art angry with thine enemies !
For these, and mourning for our errors,
And sins, that point their terrors,
We bow our heads before Thee, and we laud
And magnify thy name, Almighty God !
But Man is thy most awful instrument,
In working out a pure intent ;
Thou cloth'st the wicked in their dazzling mail,
And for thy righteous purpose they prevail ;
Thine arm from peril guards the coasts
Of them who in thy laws delight :
Thy presence turns the scale of doubtful fight,
Tremendous God of battles, Lord of Hosts !

V

Forbear :—to Thee—
Father and Judge of all, with fervent tongue
But in a gentler strain
Of contemplation, by no sense of wrong,
(Too quick and keen) incited to disdain
Of pity pleading from the heart in vain—
TO THEE—TO THEE
Just God of christianised Humanity
Shall praises be poured forth, and thanks ascend,
That thou hast brought our warfare to an end,
And that we need no second victory !
Blest, above measure blest,
If on thy love our Land her hopes shall rest,
And all the Nations labour to fulfil
Thy law, and live henceforth in peace, in pure good
will.

XLVI

Ode

The Morning of the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving,
January 18, 1826

I

HAIL, orient Conqueror of gloomy Night!
Thou that canst shed the bliss of gratitude
On hearts howe'er insensible or rude;
Whether thy punctual visitations smite
The haughty towers where monarchs dwell;
Or thou, impartial Sun, with presence bright
Cheer'st the low threshold of the peasant's cell!
Not unrejoiced I see thee climb the sky
In naked splendour, clear from mist or haze,
Or cloud approaching to divert the rays,
Which even in deepest winter testify
Thy power and majesty,
Dazzling the vision that presumes to gaze.
—Well does thine aspect usher in this Day;
As aptly suits therewith that modest pace
Submitted to the chains
That bind thee to the path which God ordains
That thou shalt trace,
Till, with the heavens and earth, thou pass away!
Nor less, the stillness of these frosty plains,
Their utter stillness, and the silent grace
Of yon ethereal summits white with snow,
(Whose tranquil pomp and spotless purity
Report of storms gone by
To us who tread below)

Do with the service of this Day accord.
—Divinest Object which the uplifted eye
Of mortal man is suffered to behold ;
Thou, who upon those snow-clad Heights hast poured
Meek lustre, nor forget'st the humble Vale ;
Thou who dost warm Earth's universal mould,
And for thy bounty wert not unadored
 By pious men of old ;
Once more, heart-cheering Sun, I bid thee hail !
Bright be thy course to-day, let not this promise fail !

II

'Mid the deep quiet of this morning hour,
All nature seems to hear me while I speak,
By feelings urged that do not vainly seek
Apt language, ready as the tuneful notes
That stream in blithe succession from the throats
 Of birds, in leafy bower,
Warbling a farewell to a vernal shower.
—There is a radiant though a short-lived flame,
That burns for Poets in the dawning east ;
And oft my soul hath kindled at the same,
When the captivity of sleep had ceased ;
But He who fixed immoveably the frame
Of the round world, and built, by laws as strong,
 A solid refuge for distress—
 The towers of righteousness ;
He knows that from a holier altar came
The quickening spark of this day's sacrifice ;
Knows that the source is nobler whence doth rise
 The current of this matin song ;
 That deeper far it lies
Than aught dependent on the fickle skies.

III

Have we not conquered?—by the vengeful sword?
Ah no, by dint of Magnanimity;
That curbed the baser passions, and left free
A loyal band to follow their liege Lord
Clear-sighted Honour, and his staid Compeers,
Along a track of most unnatural years;
In execution of heroic deeds
Whose memory, spotless as the crystal beads
Of morning dew upon the untrodden meads,
Shall live enrolled above the starry spheres.
He, who in concert with an earthly string
Of Britain's acts would sing,
He with enraptured voice will tell
Of One whose spirit no reverse could quell;
Of One that mid the failing never failed—
Who paints how Britain struggled and prevailed
Shall represent her labouring with an eye
Of circumspect humanity;
Shall show her clothed with strength and skill,
All martial duties to fulfil;
Firm as a rock in stationary fight;
In motion rapid as the lightning's gleam;
Fierce as a flood-gate bursting at mid night
To rouse the wicked from their giddy dream—
Woe, woe to all that face her in the field!
Appalled she may not be, and cannot yield.

IV

And thus is *missed* the sole true glory
That can belong to human story !
At which they only shall arrive
Who through the abyss of weakness dive.
The very humblest are too proud of heart ;
And one brief day is rightly set apart
For Him who lifteth up and layeth low ;
For that Almighty God to whom we owe,
Say not that we have vanquished—but that we survive.

V

How dreadful the dominion of the impure !
Why should the Song be tardy to proclaim
That less than power unbounded could not tame
That soul of Evil—which, from hell let loose,
Had filled the astonished world with such abuse
As boundless patience only could endure ?
—Wide-wasted regions—cities wrapt in flame—
Who sees, may lift a streaming eye
To Heaven ;—who never saw, may heave a sigh ;
But the foundation of our natures shakes,
And with an infinite pain the spirit aches,
When desolated countries, towns on fire,
Are but the avowed attire
Of warfare waged with desperate mind
Against the life of virtue in mankind ;
Assaulting without ruth
The citadels of truth ;
While the fair gardens of civility,
By ignorance defaced,
By violence laid waste,
Perish without reprieve for flower or tree !

VI

A crouching purpose—a distracted will—
 Opposed to hopes that battered upon scorn,
 And to desires whose ever-waxing horn
 Not all the light of earthly power could fill ;
 Opposed to dark, deep plots of patient skill,
 And to celerities of lawless force ;
 Which, spurning God, had flung away remorse—
 What could they gain but shadows of redress ?
 —So bad proceeded propagating worse ;
 And discipline was passion's dire excess.
 Widens the fatal web, its lines extend,
 And deadlier poisons in the chalice blend.
 When will your trials teach you to be wise ?
 —O prostrate Lands, consult your agonies !

VII

No more—the guilt is banish'd,
 And, with the guilt, the shame is fled ;
 And, with the guilt and shame, the Woe hath vanish'd,
 Shaking the dust and ashes from her head !
 —No more—these lingerings of distress
 Sully the limpid stream of thankfulness.
 What robe can Gratitude employ
 So seemly as the radiant vest of Joy ?
 What steps so suitable as those that move
 In prompt obedience to spontaneous measures
 Of glory, and felicity, and love,
 Surrendering the whole heart to sacred pleasures ?

VIII

O Britain ! dearer far than life is dear,
If one there be
Of all thy progeny
Who can forget thy prowess, never more
Be that ungrateful Son allowed to hear
Thy green leaves rustle or thy torrents roar.
As springs the lion from his den,
As from a forest-brake
Upstarts a glistening snake,
The bold Arch-despot reappeared ;—again
Wide Europe heaves, impatient to be cast,
With all her armèd Powers,
On that offensive soil, like waves upon a thousand
shores.
The trumpet blew a universal blast !
But Thou art foremost in the field :—there stand :
Receive the triumph destined to thy hand !
All States have glorified themselves ;—their claims
Are weighed by Providence, in balance even ;
And now, in preference to the mightiest names,
To Thee the exterminating sword is given.
Dread mark of approbation, justly gained !
Exalted office, worthily sustained !

IX

Preserve, O Lord ! within our hearts
The memory of thy favour,
That else insensibly departs,
And loses its sweet savour !
Lodged it within us !—as the power of light
Lives inexhaustibly in precious gems,
Fixed on the front of Eastern diadems,
So shine our thankfulness for ever bright !
What offering, what transcendent monument
Shall our sincerity to Thee present ?
—Not work of hands ; but trophies that may reach
To highest Heaven—the labour of the Soul ;
That builds, as thy unerring precepts teach,
Upon the internal conquests made by each,
Her hope of lasting glory for the whole.
Yet will not heaven disown nor earth gainsay
The outward service of this day ;
Whether the worshippers entreat
Forgiveness from God's mercy-seat ;
Or thanks and praises to His throne ascend
That He has brought our warfare to an end,
And that we need no second victory !——
Ha ! what a ghastly sight for man to see ;
And to the heavenly saints in peace who dwell
For a brief moment, terrible ;
But, to thy sovereign penetration, fair,
Before whom all things are that were,
All judgments that have been, or e'er shall be
Links in the chain of thy tranquillity !
Along the bosom of this favoured Nation,
Breathe Thou, this day, a vital undulation !
Let all who do this land inherit
Be conscious of thy moving spirit !

Oh, 'tis a goodly Ordinance,—the sight,
Though sprung from bleeding war; is one of pure
delight ;
Bless Thou the hour, or e'er the hour arrive,
When a whole people shall kneel down in prayer,
And, at one moment, in one rapture, strive
With lip and heart to tell their gratitude
For thy protecting care,
Their solemn joy—praising the Eternal Lord
For tyranny subdued,
And for the sway of equity renewed,
For liberty confirmed, and peace restored !

x

But hark—the summons !—down the placid lake
Floats the soft cadence of the church-tower bells ;
Bright shines the Sun, as if his beams would wake
The tender insects sleeping in their cells ;
Bright shines the Sun—and not a breeze to shake
The drops that tip the melting icicles.

O, enter now his temple gate !

Inviting words—perchance already flung
(As the crowd press devoutly down the aisle
Of some old Minster's venerable pile)
From voices into zealous passion stung,
While the tubed engine feels the inspiring blast
And has begun—its clouds of sound to cast
Forth towards empyreal Heaven,
As if the fretted roof were riven.

Us, humbler ceremonies now await ;
But in the bosom, with devout respect
The banner of our joy we will erect,
And strength of love our souls shall elevate :

For to a few collected in his name,
Their heavenly Father will incline an ear
Gracious to service hallowed by its aim ;—
Awake ! the majesty of God revere !

Go—and with foreheads meekly bowed
Present your prayers—go—and rejoice aloud—

The Holy One will hear !

And what, 'mid silence deep, with faith sincere,
Ye, in your low and undisturbed estate,
Shall simply feel and purely meditate—
Of warnings—from the unprecedented might,
Which, in our time, the impious have disclosed ;
And of more arduous duties thence imposed
Upon the future advocates of right ;

Of mysteries revealed,
And judgments unrepealed,
Of earthly revolution,
And final retribution,—

To his omniscience will appear
An offering not unworthy to find place,
On this high DAY OF THANKS, before the Throne of
Grace !

NOTES

NOTES

PART I

III

¹ Robert Jones, afterwards Fellow of St. John's, Cambridge, was Wordsworth's companion in his walking tour in 1790, the tour referred to in this sonnet.

² July 14, 1790.

VI

³ In 1796, by the treaty of Campo Formio, the Venetian Republic ceased to exist. Austria divided its territory between herself and France.

VII

⁴ This king was Gustavus IV., who, on his accession in 1792, joined the Allies against Buonaparte.

VIII

⁵ Toussaint (called L'Ouverture), born in St. Domingo, was the child of African slaves. Royalist in his sympathies till 1794, he then took the side of the French Republic, which had emancipated the slaves. He was made general of the French army and drove the English and the Spaniards out of St. Domingo. He governed the island till 1801, when Buonaparte re-established slavery. Against this he rebelled, was outlawed, treacherously seized, and brought to Paris, where in 1803 he died in prison.

